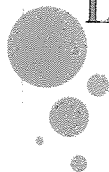


Ruth Sutton Nov. /09

CREATING INDEPENDENT STUDENT LEARNERS



Assessment for Learning: principles,
practice and whole school change

*A seminar with Ruth Sutton
KootneyLake, November 2009*

Sutton.ruth@gmail.com

MY TASK, WITH YOUR HELP

- To explore the principles of Assessment for Learning
- To identify best practice
- To share current experience
- To examine the gap between 'knowing' and 'doing', and how to close it
- To encourage sustainable whole school change
- To encourage reflection and strategic planning



SOME 'ILLUSTRATIVE' STORIES

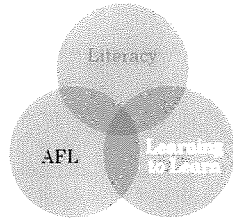
- Reading recovery
- Spelling
- Exemplars
- Highlighters

Can you find a
common thread?



OVERLAPPING ISSUES

- Literacy, assessment for learning, and learning to learn are not separate issues, to be planned separately, managed separately and evaluated separately
- In schools and classrooms these issues overlap



AFL: NOT AN INITIATIVE, MORE AN APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

All aspects of the teaching process are affected by AFL principles

- Planning for learning, not for coverage
- Questioning for thinking, not just for answers
- Marking for improvement, not just for marks
- Feedback for learning
- Reporting for learning, not just for accountability

ASSESSMENT: 2 KEY PURPOSES

Assessment of learning

Checks learning to date
Audience beyond the classroom
Periodic
Uses numbers, scores and grades
Criterion/standards referenced
No need to involve the learner

Assessment for learning

Suggests next learning
Audience is teachers and learners
Continual - conversation and marking
Specific feedback, using words
Self-referenced, 'ipsative'
Must involve the learner - the person most able to improve learning

- Knows what he understands and can do
- Knows what she can't do, yet
- Knows what to do next

AND

- Knows what to do when he doesn't know what to do

THE BIG 5 PRINCIPLES

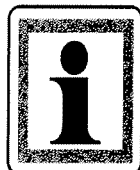
(IDENTIFIED BY THE UK ASSESSMENT REFORM GROUP, 1999)

1. "The provision of effective feedback to students
2. The active involvement of students in their own learning
3. Adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment
4. Recognition of the profound influence assessment has on the motivation and self-esteem of pupils, both of which are crucial influences on learning
5. The need for students to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve"



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK?

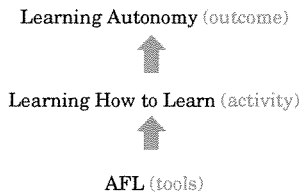
- Descriptive (not evaluative)
- Specific
- Constructive
- Connected to clear criteria
- Timely
- Helps identify next steps
- Followed through



- In March 2009 the Third International Conference on Assessment for Learning took place in New Zealand
- This refreshed definition took two days of discussion and several drafts
- The full paper is available on request from me at sutton.ruth@gmail.com

- “Assessment for Learning is part of everyday practice by students, teachers and peers **that** seeks, reflects upon and responds to information **from** dialogue, demonstration and observation **in** ways **that** enhance ongoing learning.”
- *(Third International AFL Conference, NZ, March 2009)*

- Main finding of the UK Teaching and Learning Research Project (2009): the goal is to create ‘learning autonomy’



AN AFL APPROACH TO SHARING EXPECTATIONS, IN THE EARLY YEARS

- In the Nursery, children talk about 'lining up': why do we bother, what would happen if we didn't, how do we do it properly
- Teacher writes up the 'Criteria for lining up' with a picture or photo to illustrate each part
- This is posted, and the teacher refers to it to remind children what to do
- Children explain to each other what they need to do and why



TEACHER'S PAPER

- Teachers clarifies and shares expectations and criteria for the assignment
- Students do the work and hand it in
- Teacher uses one colour highlighter to circle bits of the work that meet the criteria and a different colour to circle bits that need correction, and returns the work
- Students are given a limited time in a small group to work out why the teacher has circled different parts of their work, and how to improve where necessary
- Students, on their own, given limited time to do the corrections, straight away, in class



STUDENT

Students raise their hand to ask a question, not to answer one

The teacher asks a good question, allows thinking time and possibly small group discussion and then chooses who should respond to the question

Every student has to be prepared to answer, even if they're not sure. Teacher will ask more questions to check out the thinking

Questioning is now part of AFL and designed to improve thinking skills and students' engagement.

The teacher has greater control over classroom interaction



AN AFL APPROACH TO PLANNING: PLANNING FOR LEARNING, NOT JUST COVERAGE

Planning for coverage

- Content is fixed
- Timing is tight
- Inflexible
- Students' questions only matter if they within the required framework
- Looks neat and tidy
- All the space is filled
- Predictable and safe

Planning for learning

- Content is decided after checking with the students
- Timing is looser
- More flexible
- Students' questions provide opportunities for teaching and learning
- Looks messy
- Some spaces are left blank: 'it depends what crops up'
- Less predictable and feels riskier



SELF THEORIES: THE WORK OF CAROL DWECK

- This American researcher concentrates on motivation, and how it's affected by learners' beliefs about themselves as learners
- Her recent book 'Mindset' is a great read
- She discusses the difference between a 'growth mindset' and a 'fixed mindset' and how these mindsets affect our approach to learning



THE GROWTH MINDSET

- People who believe that their 'cleverness' is fixed tend to assume that failure is the end of learning and give up quickly, while those with a growth mindset see it as an opportunity to learn more, and persevere
- If you don't expect to make progress, you find success only in comparisons with others, not striving for your own 'personal best'



- Some of our 'cleverest' students are the least willing to take a risk or persevere when they encounter something they can't do
- Adult learners have this range of views as well as young learners

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TESTS AND MOTIVATION

- 2002 research study on what happens to teaching, learning and motivation when the use of external tests increases
- Published by the UK Assessment Reform Group
- Looked at examples from North America, UK and other systems where students are subject to testing



KEY FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

- "The review emphasizes what teachers in classrooms can do to avoid the negative impact of tests on motivation for learning. It also indicates the actions that can enhance motivation for learning. To accomplish these goals teachers should...."



DO MORE OF THIS:



- "Provide choice and help students to take more responsibility for their own learning
- Discuss with students the purpose of their learning and provide feedback that will help the learning process
- Encourage students to judge their work by how much they have learned and by the progress they have made
- Help students to understand the criteria by which their learning is assessed and to assess their own work"



"AND DO LESS OF THIS...."



- Define the curriculum in terms of what is in the tests, to the detriment of what is not tested
- Give frequent drill and practice for test taking
- Teach how to answer specific test questions
- Allow students to judge their work in terms of scores and grades
- Allow test anxiety to impair some students' performance."



FEEDBACK FOR LEARNING IN
WINNIPEG INNER CITY SINCE 2000

- Inner City schools involved in this project over several years
- Trying to change classroom assessment and feedback so that students are more engaged and more successful
- Tried to identify more precisely what teachers and students need to do to make this work
- Full findings published in September 2006



TEACHERS
STUDENTS

- Teacher is clear about purpose and task
- Teacher knows how to 'State, share and show' learning expectations
- Teacher designs and explains 'Enabling tasks'
- Teacher and students develop criteria
- Students check their work, while the task is in progress
- Students say what's OK and what's not
- Students identify a next step
- Students continue, or correct work so far
- Students reflect periodically on what they've learned, and how they learned it
- Students present learning and achievement to an audience



TEN STEPS – THE ACTIONS TO HELP US REMEMBER

1. Task
2. Purpose (heart)
3. Share
4. Small Steps
5. Get Working
6. Look and check
7. Idea for improvement
8. Take a step towards
9. Look back to reflect
10. Present learning

CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

- Share classroom strategies you currently use to involve students in classroom assessment
- What works well? Why does it work?
- What hasn't worked well so far? Why not, and how might you fix it?
- Identify one or two strategies to share with everyone: who's going to explain it and what do you want them to say?

THE PURPOSES OF INTENT

- Intent
 - To raise awareness of different forms and purposes of assessment and their impact on students
 - To identify guidelines for successful involvement of students in classroom assessment

- Volume
- Creativity
- Appropriateness

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

- Based on what we've just witnessed, what are the practical 'do's and don'ts' for involving students in developing criteria, using them to critique their work, and providing feedback?

HOW DOES GRADING FIT WITH AFL?

On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), allocate a score to each of these statements. Give reasons for your choice, and discuss them with your neighbour

- Teachers have the right to make individual decisions about the grades they award, based on whatever information and 'formulas' they choose to use.
- Every piece of work done by a student should be given a grade.
- It is fair and effective for teachers to give zeros.
- A percentage grade is more accurate than a letter grade.
- Parents understand the basis on which grades are awarded, and what the grades mean about a student's work and progress.
- An overall grade for a student can include attendance and behaviour as well as academic achievement.
- Grades motivate students to take steps to improve their learning.
- Grading can continue to be handled in the way it has always been done, with 'Assessment for Learning' running alongside.

THE ASSESSMENT DILEMMA

- Even if we believe that some elements of traditional grading practice may actually damage learning, it's unlikely that grading will be 'abolished'
- How can some grading be sustained while still encouraging the improvement of learning and motivation through AFL classroom strategies?

WELCOME BACK!

- Look back over yesterday's learning
- Talk it through with someone
- Do you have a question, a comment, or an insight to share?

LEARNING FROM OUR EXPERIENCE

- On your own, and from your own experience, reflect on how a change in teaching practice happened. What was done, by whom, and to what effect? Was the changed practice sustained? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
- Share this experience with two or three others
- Draw up some 'do's and don'ts' on leading a successful classroom change process

- ✓ establish why change is important
- ✓ ensure resources to support change are in place
- ✓ support teachers as learners
- ✓ revisit, revisit, revisit
- ✓ allow for grieving
- ✓ stay the course
- * big vision, small steps

TEACHING AND LEADING ARE

BOTH HARD-WIRED HABITS

- We learn to teach mainly through experience
- Our teaching and leadership styles reflect our personal approach: what we do is a reflection of who we are
- Habits are notoriously hard to change



THE 3 PART BRAIN

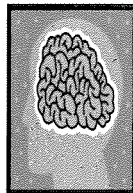
- The neo-cortex:
useful for academic assignments
- The reptilian brain:
useful for basic instincts
- The limbic brain:
useful for changing habits





FROM 'KNOWING' TO 'DOING'

- The practices of teaching, schooling and leadership are deeply ingrained or 'hard-wired'
- Habits are formed and changed in the limbic brain not the neo-cortex
- They can only be changed through the limbic brain



CHANGING HABITS

ACCORDING TO 'ADDICTION THEORY' (PROSHASKA)

- Pre-contemplation
- Contemplation
- First step
- Discomfort and floundering
- Practice
- Confidence
- New habit
- Coach someone else



THE WEIGHTWATCHERS MODEL

The Weight-watchers model for improving teaching, and leadership, involves:



- Big, important, agreed goals*
- Small steps and continual feedback*
- Perseverance*
- Collegial support and accountability*
- Recognition of success*



IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

We need **'inside out'** professional learning, rather than **'outside in'**



MY EXPERIENCE

Change as a three stage process: one stage each year (?)

- 1 Small scale action research, involving a well-chosen group of teachers, some volunteers plus some invited 'opinion leaders'
- 2 More teachers are invited/encouraged to join in, with opportunity to share their experiences with others
- 3 School systems and structures changed to include new AFL features. For example:
 - *school guidelines are developed on planning, questioning, marking and feedback that reflect AFL principles and practice.*
 - *Teacher evaluation criteria and process reflect AFL guidelines.*
 - *Reports and 'parent conferences' involve students*



THE IMPORTANCE OF 'BUY-IN'

- What's in it for each of the groups of 'stakeholders' to accept different ways of doing business?
 - Students?
 - Teachers?
 - Parents?
-
- How might you set about seeking buy-in from any of these groups?



HOW BEST TO DEVELOP AND SUSTAIN AFL IN THE SCHOOL

- Provide a rationale: what's in this for teachers as well as students?
- Create an 'action research' climate in the school: encourage a group of teachers to choose an AFL strategy and try it out with one group of students
- Teachers report back regularly to their 'group' and to the school leaders, review their success and progress, adjust, spread, gather evidence of what happens to student learning and their own teaching
- School leaders encourage this group to share with their peers, and invite others to join them
- Schools adapt their systems and structures to incorporate new expectations



SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND STUDENT OUTCOMES

NZ 'BEST EVIDENCE' RESEARCH,
VIVIANNE ROBINSON, 2007

- 26 studies, of which 11 were chosen as most useful to decide the leadership activities most associated with improving student learning and achievement
- Each activity was identified, and its 'effect size' showing how important it was



- Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment (0.27)
- Strategic resourcing (0.34)
- Goal setting (0.35)
- Planning, co-ordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum (0.42)
- Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development (0.84)



IMPLICATIONS OF THIS ANALYSIS?

- How could you spend more time encouraging teacher development, teaching for learning, and teachers as learners?
- What's your professional learning goal and how will you find the evidence that you've achieved it?



STRATEGIC PLANNING 1

Where are we now?

Where do we want to be?

Specific features of the current situation

Specific goals one year from now

STRATEGIC PLANNING 2

What will help us?

What could block us?

PRIORITISING

	Easy to achieve	Harder to achieve
Really important		
Less important		<i>Life is short – leave this box blank</i>

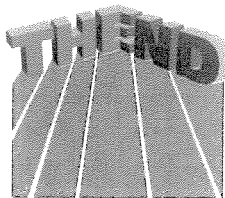
PLANNING AND DELEGATING

	Do it yourself	Delegate – to whom? How?
Within days		
Within 3 weeks		
Within 3 months		

LEARNING CONVERSATIONS

- Very careful listening
- Open questions designed to make the other person reflect, not just to seek information
- Clear achievable next steps





- Thanks for your company
- Keep in touch!
- Sutton.ruth@gmail.com

- * articulated district directions (i.e. differentiated instructional strategies, AFL, etc.)
- * Creating Independent Student Learners (

Carolinec.
Where can I go to read about the connection of Ab. Ed. culture and school achievement for Ab. Ed. students. I would like to find a short article to
- * feedback for learning vs. assessment for
- * KWL u: AFL
 - What do you already know about AFL
 - What do you want to know? What's k
 - What questions do you have?
- * Alberta Assessment Consortium ~ AFL
- * Mindsets book ~ get from Nathan (re
- * AFL is a means to an end ~ creating inde
- * inservice focus not on AFL, but instead
 - reporting, etc.
- * what kind of quality feedback do teachers get? need to model AFL across system
- * to student: "Do you know what to do next to improve your work?"
- * homework s/b called practice
- * teach kids about brain growth + practice → growth mindset; also show kids evidence of growth over time
- * motivational principle of AFL is personal best
- * involving the learner improves the learning (based on research)
- * self assessment / peer assessment are skills that need to be taught + practiced
- * "tell less, ask more"
- * planning for coverage vs. planning for learning
- * How to Grade for Learning ~ Ken O'Connor
- * transition strats → management (Alo's talk to each other about pragmatics of move)
 - social (kids need to feel welcomed in new building)
 - curric content (know what they were taught)
 - how they were taught (how to segue between two buildings)
 - ensure kids are independent learners as they transition
- ~ 40% of students learn fail to make expected progress in gr. 8
- * focused collaboration w/a commitment to action

power + control)

ie - punishment + reward

about?

Dweck

* Crowe honour trip to university / college

* honour rolls ~ effort / academic